

CHAPTER 5. INTERIM MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

If Reclamation adopts a strategy of using study area mitigation benefits to offset environmental losses incurred by developing the ALP Project, then a program to ensure mitigation success must be implemented. The program will be developed with assistance from federal and state agencies and other ALP Project participants. The land will be actively managed between the purchase of land title(s) or easement(s) and the implementation of the mitigation program. This chapter provides a brief overview of an interim program for the management and monitoring of the study area properties. It is introductory only, written to give the reader a basic outline of a successful program approach.

5.1 INTERIM MANAGEMENT

Should Reclamation purchase the Huntington or other study area properties, an interim land management plan would be further developed. The development of the management plan would be lead by Reclamation using a multi-disciplinary team. Interim refers to the period between property purchase and that point in time when Reclamation completes site-specific mitigation plans and begins implementation of those plans. The interim plan would be modified as decisions are made concerning mitigation criteria and land management direction. If and when Reclamation purchases the property (provided all purchase criteria are met), a land management agency would be named to manage the property. It is presently assumed that the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), the SUT, or possibly another agency would be selected as the land management agency.

Due to the lack of a fully defined ALP Project and limited project funds, Reclamation would not proceed with the development and implementation of a definite mitigation/enhancement program until the mitigation requirements for the ALP Project are fully defined and funded. In the interim, it is anticipated that Reclamation and/or a management agency would manage any acquired property(s) to prevent further degradation of the values for which the property(s) is to be managed. There would be two primary management objectives during the interim period:

- (1) The lands would be managed primarily for the enhancement of riparian/wetlands, native fish, wildlife, and threatened and endangered species. Other uses compatible with these primary management issues could be considered and evaluated as the definite mitigation/enhancement program is developed.
- (2) No incompatible management uses contrary to the resource enhancement objectives would be permitted on the described property. This would likely include, but would not necessarily be limited to: off road vehicle uses, recreation development and use, development of public roads, gravel extraction, livestock grazing, and special uses that could lead to degradation of existing resource values.

To meet the primary management objectives, the following would be implemented:

- Livestock grazing would be eliminated.
- No trails, picnic areas, camping areas, or special parking would be constructed for public use.
- Noxious weed control would be implemented, where needed.
- Public access for hunting and fishing could be allowed, dependent on effects on fish and wildlife resources. For that portion of the study area located within SUIT lands, Tribal hunting and fishing would be allowed as provided by law.
- Fencing would be constructed and maintained to keep out adjacent stock, as needed.
- Applicable signs would be posted to notify the public of property management practices and rules.
- Land use planning and management objectives would give high priority to the preservation of significant archaeological resources.
- A fire management plan would be prepared and implemented, as part of the land management plan.
- No public wood gathering or cutting would be allowed.

5.2 RESOURCE MONITORING

An interim resource monitoring program would be implemented immediately after acquisition of the study area properties. The monitoring program would have three primary objectives:

- (1) Provide a thorough assessment of baseline conditions.
- (2) Collect information regarding the rate of recovery for selected resources.
- (3) Evaluate the effectiveness of management and enhancement strategies.

To a large degree, aspects of the first objective have already been undertaken, with various resource data having been collected to provide the knowledge base for this document. However, many data collected to date are of a preliminary or reconnaissance level. A thorough, detailed documentation of baseline (i.e., pre-enhancement) conditions is essential so that improvements in resource values can be unambiguously determined. Collection of resource information would be

continued for an extended period of years to evaluate resource recovery rates and the effectiveness of specific enhancement strategies. These data would be essential for an adaptive management strategy by which the more effective mitigation/enhancement measures could be more fully employed with less effective measures dropped from use.

Although full details of an interim monitoring plan would be developed later, it would include the assessment of both physical and biological parameters. Physical conditions, although not usually considered resources in the same light as plants, fish, and wildlife, are important limiting factors that shape the environment for biotic resources. The evaluation of future biotic trends must consider both natural changes in the physical environment and how human land management change the physical environment. Therefore, it is expected that the interim monitoring program would minimally collect data about:

- Climatology, hydrology, water quality, and geomorphology
- Riparian/wetland plant communities
- Fisheries
- Wildlife
- Threatened and endangered species.